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AUTHOR Lesesne, Teri S.
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ABSTRACT

This paper offers 9 teaching questions to be used with Stephen Manes', "The Obnoxious Jerks," a humorous novel in which students challenge school rules in high school. The paper also provides a brief description of the novel, a biographical sketch of the author, and a selected bibliography of 21 related works. (PRA)

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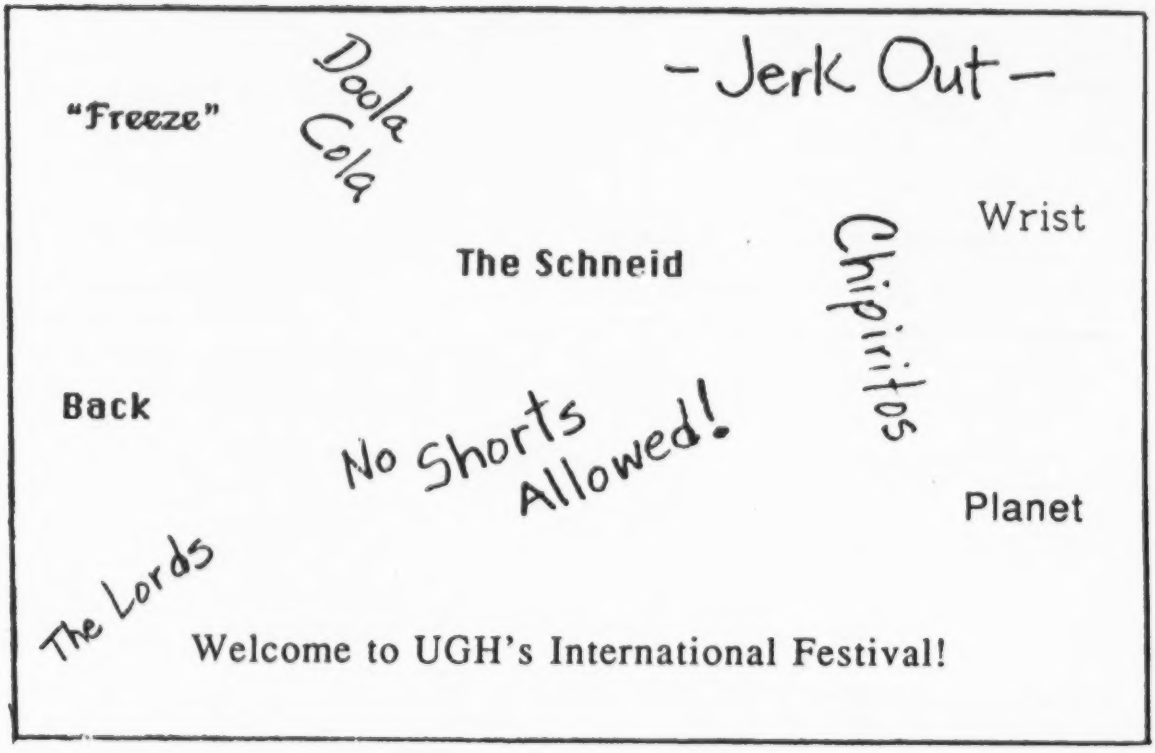
A Book Discussion Guide for The Obnoxious Jerks

by

Stephen Manes



A Presentation by
Dr. Teri S. Lesesne
Sam Houston State University

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Manes, Stephen. The Obnoxious Jerks. Bantam, 1990. 212 pages.

Frank Wess, Perry Wu, Roberto Garcia, Dennis Schneider, Joe Ippolito, Wilver Sims, Mike Daley, Aristides Demetrios, and Harry Swarzkopf are the Obnoxious Jerks, a name given them by a teacher frustrated by their zany, if harmless, antics. To be an Obnoxious Jerk means eating lots of Chipirito tortilla chips (jalapeno flavor only, please), drinking gallons of Doola Cola, and planning imaginative "jerk outs." These jerk outs are meant to point out the absurdities found in any contemporary high school such as dress codes forbidding the wearing of shorts. With the help of honorary Obnoxious Jerk member, Leslie Freeze, the Obnoxious Jerks manage to accomplish their goals but often with mixed feelings.

Stephen Manes creates memorable, believable, likable characters whose actions ring true. Serious subjects, such as challenging inane rules and railing against the system, are handled deftly. The result: the reader is entertained by Manes' outrageous sense of humor.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Stephen Manes was born in 1949 in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, and attended the University of Chicago and the University of Southern California. He has written numerous books for children and young adult readers (see selected bibliography) as well as screenplay adaptations of a few of his works. He has also written screenplays for popular films such as "Mother, Jugs, and Speed" starring Bill Cosby and Raquel Welch. He is a contributing editor for *PC* and *PCjr* magazines and writes a monthly column for each. "Writing has been a part of my life as far back as I can remember," he writes. Books are important commercial products, Manes believes, because they can convey an individual point of view. Ultimately, the book is the author's work, and he is solely responsible for the end product.

Teaching Ideas for

The Obnoxious Jerks

by

Stephen Manes

1. Use the opening scene as a "read and tease." Read only this passage as a means of motivating readers.

2. Use the opening passage for a DRTA. Ask students to predict what they think is happening at several points in the passage.

3. Book talk this book along with other Manes works (see selected bibliography) and other related books (see selected bibliography).

4. Use The Obnoxious Jerks in a Reader's Theater.

5. Debate the way in which the Obnoxious Jerks treat Leslie Freeze. Are they guilty of being chauvinistic?

6. Students can be encouraged to write about the rules and regulations of their school. Are there some which they find absurd? Which are they? Perhaps students can write letters to the administration stating their case for rule changes.

7. This book may serve as a jumping off point for a discussion of civil disobedience. Students can do research into the lives and works of Emerson, Thoreau, Martin Luther King Jr., etc.

8. Students can write in their journals about the various "cliques" and/or groups in their school.

9. Students can do brief book talks about Manes' works for the class.

A Selected Bibliography of Works Related to:

THE OBNOXIOUS JERKS

Manes, Stephen. The Boy Who Turned into a TV Set. Avon, 1983.

_____. The Great Gerbil Roundup. Harper, 1991.

_____. Be Perfect Person in Just Three Days. Clarion, 1982.

_____. Some of the Adventures of Rhode Island Red. Harper, 1990.

_____. The Hooples' Haunted House. Delacorte, 1981.

_____. The Hooples' Horrible Holiday. Avon,

_____. Hooples on the Highway. Coward, 1978.

_____. That Game from Outer Space. Dutton, 1983.

_____. The Oscar J. Noodleman Television Network. Dutton, 1983.

_____. Chicken Trek. Bantam, 1989.

_____. Clash of the Titans Storybook. Golden Books, 1981.

Related Books

Korman, Gordon. A Semester in the Life of a Garbage Bag.

_____. Son of Interflux.

_____. The Zucchini Warriors.

Conford, Ellen. The Alfred E. Graebner Memorial High School Handbook of Rules and Regulations.

Paulsen, Gary. The Boy Who Owned the School.

Sachar, Louis. Dogs Don't Tell Jokes.

James, Mary. Shoebag.

Townsend, Sue. The Secret Diary of Adrian Mole.

Danziger, Paula. The Cat Ate My Gymsuit.

Hentoff, Nat. The Day They Came to Arrest the Book.